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HISTORICAL NOTES

APPROPRIATE TO THE VISIT

OF THE

U. S. Scout Cruiser Chester



TO THE

CITY OF CHESTER, PENNA.

November 27th—December 1st, 1909

Prepared by the Historical Committee.



Class 7157

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HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

HENRY GRAHAM ASHMEAD, *Chairman*

HON. WILLIAM B. BROOMALL

GEN. HENRY CLAY COCHRANE

W. SHALER JOHNSON

CHARLES PALMER

JOHN J. HARE

DR. JOHN HOSKINS

W. J. ARNOLD

H. A. FAIRLAMB

HARRY MCGILLIGAN

And the following four ladies representing the
Delaware County Chapter, Daughters of the
American Revolution :

MRS. RICHARD PETERS, JR.

MRS. JAMES A. G. CAMPBELL

MISS SALLIE FLICKWIR

MRS. R. SOMERS RHODES

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CHESTER IN CONNECTION WITH THE U. S. NAVY, AND EVENTS ON THE DELAWARE.

To commemorate the visit of the Scout Cruiser Chester to the ancient city for which she is named, a Historical Committee was appointed and it has occurred to them that some account of Chester's identification with the Navy of the United States and with Revolutionary incidents would be most appropriate. Although but a very small town, having less than one thousand inhabitants at the time, Chester is found to have figured quite prominently in the British occupation of Philadelphia, and to have contributed many officers to the Navy since, among them the first two full admirals—Farragut and Porter—both of whom played in our streets as boys. Later on, as the town grew larger, other citizens entered the naval service and many ships of war were launched from our shores, Roach's shipyard, where they were constructed, becoming of world-wide reputation. Record of John Fitch's early trips in his steamboat, antedating Hudson by seventeen years, is also included in this record, as she made regular trips to Chester.

THE POLLY.

The first incident connecting the port of Chester with the coming troubles of the American Revolution was on Saturday, Christmas day, 1773, when the detested and much advertised tea-ship, "Polly," reached Chester, she having followed another ship up the river, for no pilot dared, in the heated condition of the people's mind in Philadelphia and the surrounding territory, to bring that vessel to the port of her destination. As soon as the Whigs of Chester were convinced that the ship with the peculiarly discolored sails, laying off the town, was the "Polly," a messenger was dispatched post haste to Philadelphia to announce the long-

expected, but unwelcome news. Gilbert Barclay, one of the consignees of the ship's cargo, who was a passenger aboard the "Polly," landed at Chester, where, procuring a conveyance, he was driven to Philadelphia. The excitement in Philadelphia when the news reached there of the arrival of the tea ship, is part of the history of the Revolution and the City of Brotherly Love. Three of the Committee were appointed to come to Chester to have an interview with Captain Ayres, and acquaint him with the public feeling respecting his voyage and the cargo with which his vessel was laden. The three gentlemen, when they reached the high land on the King's Highway, at what is now Prospect Park, met a messenger from Chester, bringing the information that the "Polly," at noon on Sunday, had weighed anchor and stood up the river. It is unnecessary to continue the story of the "Polly" in detail, how she lay off Gloucester, how Captain Ayres went to the city of Philadelphia, how eight thousand men assembled at the State House yard Monday morning and resolved that the tea should not be landed, that the vessel should not be reported nor entered at that port and that the tea must be taken back to England immediately, time only being permitted to provision the vessel for her return voyage across the sea; how a pilot was placed on the "Polly" and carried her down to Reedy Island, and how permission was given to Captain Ayres to remain in Philadelphia twenty-four hours, to procure the supplies for his return voyage. On Tuesday, Captain Ayres, after being in the city forty-six hours, came by land to Chester, where he boarded the dinkey carrying supplies to the "Polly," and like a prudent man, sailed for London, where later he reported the unsatisfactory results of his voyage. On February 5, 1774, showing that the "Polly" had made a quick homeward run, Earl Dartmouth wrote to Governor Penn, that "the Insult that has been offered to the Kingdom by the Inhabitants of Philadelphia, in the case of the "Polly," Captain Ayres, is of a very serious nature, and leads to very important consequences." In conclusion the Earl demanded that "a Circumstance, which at present Appears so extraordinary, shall be fully explained." But his Lordship's demand has remained unexplained to this day, so far as the records disclose the facts. But it was at Chester where

Captain Ayres first stepped ashore from the "Polly," and it was at Chester he left Pennsylvania on his return voyage to London.

PHILADELPHIA IN BRITISH HANDS.

When Philadelphia fell into the control of the British Army, September 25, 1777, Gen. Howe sent a messenger to notify the English fleet, which was then collected off Chester, that he had taken possession of the city. On October 6, Commodore Hazelwood, in command of the Pennsylvania Navy, that still held the river above Chester, came down and attacked the smaller English vessels just above this town, with the result that the ships retired and lay off in the stream, before and below Chester, where nine of His Majesty's ships of war, were then moored, and the same day the Forty-second and the Tenth British Regiments, with two howitzers and two mortars, marched from Chester to Philadelphia to protect a large quantity of provisions which had been landed at the old Market street wharf, for the use of the British troops then holding Philadelphia by force of arms. The Continental authorities were still relying on the protection afforded by the Chevaux-de-frise, being wholly ignorant at that time that Robert White, who had been employed to sink the obstructions had designedly left the channel near the Pennsylvania side above Chester, open. Yet so hazardous was the approach to Philadelphia by the river held by the enemy, that during the whole time the British held possession of the city, most of the British vessels lay in the stream below the Horseshoe, making the town of Chester the port where the supplies for the King's forces were disembarked. On October 31, 1777, Captain Montross, Chief Engineer of the British Army, wrote: "We have just now an army without provisions, a Rum artillery for Beseiging, scarce any ammunition, no clothing, nor any money. Somewhat dejected by Burgoyne's Capitulation, and not elated with our late Manoeuvres as Dunlop repulse," (at Red Bank) "and the 'Augustas' and 'Merlin' "being burnt and to complete all Blockaded." On October 27, Gen. Potter, of Pennsylvania Militia, reported that "sixty ships of the enemy were lying at and below Chester." On

November 18th, Lord Cornwallis, with the 5th, 15th, 17th, 33d Regiments, a battalion of Hessians and the Light Infantry, with 12 pieces of artillery and several howitzers and a train of baggage wagons, in all nearly three thousand men, and so many were the boats and stages of the British vessels at Chester that in a few hours the entire force was transported across the river to New Jersey, in the advance to Billingsport. The next day, Major John Clark, who had been detailed from General Greene's staff by Washington—without the knowledge of Greene, who looked on Clark as a deserter—on secret service, wrote that from Mrs. Withy's tavern the "Plow and Harrow," at Fifth and Market streets, where is now the Cambridge Trust Company building, he had watched Cornwallis march through the town and that eighty British vessels lay off this place. Captain Montessor's diary shows that in most instances the British vessels ascended the Delaware no higher than Chester. On November 21, 1777, he writes: "This morning sailed from Chester despatches for New York." On April 8, 1778, he records: "Arrived the 'Brune' frigate at Chester, having sprung her mainmast in the late Gale and also the 'Iris,' ship of war, with 8 transports, part of 12 separated in ye Gale." On the 22nd, he continues: "This day arrived at Chester a fleet of 35 sail from New York, with forage, etc. Also arrived the "Eagle" (the flag-ship) "with Lord Howe." On the 28th, he writes: "The 'Lord Hyde' Packet, only sailed from Chester this morning," and on May 7, 1778, he records, "The 'Porcupine,' sloop-of-war, arrived at Chester this evening from England, where she left 25th of March last." Joseph Bishop, an old resident of Delaware county, stated that when a boy he had stood on the porch at Lamokin Hall—later known as the Perkin's mansion—and watched the British fleet practicing and on several occasions when receiving distinguished personages the yards were manned and the vessels gaily dressed with many flags and streamers. Even Gen. Howe, when relieved from the command of the King's forces in America, came by land to Chester, and May 26, 1778, Montessor writes: "Early this morning sailed from below Billingsport for England the 'Andromeda' frigate, Brine, commander, in which went Sir William Howe."

BRITISH INHUMANITY TO CHESTERIANS.

While Chester was held by the British authority during the late fall and winter of 1777-8, many acts of wanton inhumanity are recorded as perpetrated by their foraging parties. The marine service was more objectionable in that respect than the army and many cases are recorded of their brutality.

David Coupland, a man of advanced years, but a pronounced advocate of the cause of the Colonists, at that time resided on the west side of Market, the third door south of Fourth, or Middle, street, as it was then known. Previous to the battle of Brandywine he had entertained the Marquis de Lafayette at his house, and that, with other things, had caused him to become very obnoxious to the Tories of the neighborhood, of whom there were a number. Hence, when the British authority was temporarily supreme, he was held under suspicion of communicating with the Continental authorities. In the spring of 1788, when the "Vulture," a British man-of-war, lay off Chester, in the middle of the night, a boat's crew came ashore, and, going to David Coupland's dwelling he was taken out of bed and conveyed to the vessel, where he was detained for many weeks a prisoner. His age, as well as the anxiety consequent on his enforced detention from home, his inability to learn aught of his family, the exposure and harsh treatment he was subjected to, finally induced a low, nervous fever. At length, when the disease began to assume alarming symptoms, the commander of the "Vulture" had him conveyed ashore and returned to his home. But it was without avail. He lingered until some time in the following August, when he died, the people of the town never doubting, as the result of the brutal treatment he had been subjected to during his captivity.

Earlier in the same year Captain John Crosby, of the Pennsylvania Militia in the Continental service, was captured in his home, Crosby Place—the old mansion still stands on the north side of the road, where the old King's Highway to Philadelphia crosses Ridley creek—and taken on board a British man-of-war, sent to New York and detained in the old "Jersey" prison-ship for six months. A

Tory neighbor had told of the captain being at home, and a boat's crew from the man-of-war surprised him as Crosby was at the pump washing his hands. His family had no intimation of his whereabouts, and it was not until three or four months later that the persistent efforts of his wife learned that he was a prisoner on the old hulk in Wallabout Bay, East River. Mrs. Crosby went to New York and after repeated failures, succeeded in obtaining her husband's release on parole. So extreme were the hardships and privations he had undergone, that his hair, which before had been dark, had turned to snowy white, and for the remainder of his life he suffered from the effects of his six months' detention in the prison ship "Jersey."

In the autumn of 1777, when in sheer wantonness the British frigate "Augusta" opened fire on the town, the family of Henry Hale Graham—then living in the house at Edgmont avenue and Graham street, still standing but greatly altered for business purposes, to which it is now applied—sought safety in the cellar, and tradition reports that one of the solid shots struck the building, doing considerable damage to the southern end of the structure.

It was during the same wholly unjustifiable cannonading that the Francis Richardson Mansion—now the Steamboat Hotel—was struck by one of the balls, shattering the wall in the south gable end towards the river. The owner, in repairing the breach, placed circular windows in the north and south gables, an addition which the people of the day said, was a noticeable improvement to the appearance of the dwelling.

FIRST NAVAL CONSTRUCTION.

In the summer of 1778, Manuel Eyre, at the instance of the State authorities, located a regular station at Chester for the building of gunboats, small vessels designed to carry one or more guns, and with crews who numbered from ten to twenty men. It is told by tradition that in order to conceal these vessels while building, the yard was located on Ship creek, then a stream of considerable size, the woods acting as screens to prevent any British vessel-of-war on the river from seeing what work was underway there.

It is said that one of the boats built there was much larger than the others and when finished and brought down to the old drawbridge crossing Chester creek at the King's Highway—now Third street, it was found that the boat was too wide to pass between the draw, hence, it was broken up and the timbers used for other purposes.

CAPTURE OF THE GENERAL MONK.

It was late in the afternoon of April 10th, 1782, that the good people of Chester of that day saw two vessels standing up the river. The foremost floated two ensigns, the stars and stripes being displayed on the same halyard with the meteoric flag of Great Britain, but the last was undermost. The intelligence ran quickly through the town and in a short time a crowd had collected on Richardson's wharf, for the news was that Capt. Joshua Barney, who had sailed from Philadelphia on the 8th in the *Hyder Ali*, had met and captured the English vessel of war, General Monk, that had been lying at the mouth of the Delaware, a terror to all the merchants of Philadelphia, as well as to the owners at lesser ports along the river. When the ships rounded to and lay by the pier, a gang plank was run out from the General Monk and Captain Barney came ashore, followed by four seamen, bearing a stretcher on which lay Captain Rodgers, of the Royal Navy, grievously wounded. The English officer was taken to the house of a Quaker lady, who nursed him for several months before he entirely recovered from his injuries. It is to be regretted that the name of this lady is not recalled in the annals of Chester, but, the biography of Commodore Barney, published in 1831, states that she was then alive, and removed to Philadelphia, where she resided, a woman well in years, on Pine street.

While it is not necessary to relate the well-known story of that fight, in which American strategy and American accuracy in firing, had overcome the enemy. At Chester, the crowd was busy in pointing out to each other the many scars of the battle the captured vessel exhibited, and gazed with amazement at the mizzen staysail, in which small canvas alone could be counted no less than 365 shot holes.

Groups gathered 'round some of the Hyder Ali's men and listened to the story of the fight and how, in twenty-six minutes, twenty-three broadsides had been fired by the American ship, and how, when the battle ended, every officer on board the British vessel except one midshipman, had been killed or wounded, and the casualties among the crew and marines were near one hundred, while on the American four had been killed and eleven wounded. "The men behind the guns," under Uncle Sam's ensign, were as capable then as they proved themselves to be a century and a quarter later in the Spanish-American War.

JOHN FITCH'S STEAMBOAT.

Eight years later, in June, 1790, the people of Chester were astonished to learn that a marvelous craft, vomiting volumes of black smoke from a pipe amidships, was in a direct line, and against the wind, coming down the river, making for the pier at the foot of Market street. It was John Fitch's steamboat—the first vessel of that description ever successfully navigated in the world—seventeen years before Robert Fulton built his celebrated steamboat, *The Clermont*. The people of the town who gathered at the wharf to inspect this peculiar vessel—which had no name other than "the Steamboat"—when it was made fast at the pier, saw a mere cockle-shell, sixty feet in length, eight feet beam, for which power was supplied by an eighteen-inch cylinder engine, and the propulsion was made by four paddles, two on each side, located at the stern. The wonder obtained an average speed of eight miles an hour. In the *New York Magazine* for the year 1790 appeared a letter dated at Philadelphia, August 13th, in which the writer says: "On Saturday morning she sets off for Chester and engages to return in the evening—40 miles," and adds, "God willing, I intend to be one of her passengers." In the *Federal Gazette*, published at Philadelphia in its issue of July 30, 1790, appeared an advertisement, informing the public that "The Steamboat sets out from Arch street wharf on Sunday morning at 8 o'clock, for Chester, to return the same day." During the months of June, July, August and September, 1790, this boat made regular trips carrying

freight and passengers—one day to Wilmington and returning, another day to Burlington and Bristol, but to Chester always on Sunday, for Chester at that time for some reason was an exceedingly attractive locality for the restless public of Philadelphia. At the end of the season the boat became disabled, the machinery being defective, and Fitch, a man of limited means, was not able to pay for the repairs necessary, while the men who had advanced the money for the construction of the boat had grown tired of an experiment which had yielded no financial return. The steamboat therefore was sold to discharge the outstanding debts, and this resulted—the engine and boiler were sold for old junk.

THE PORTER FAMILY.

To the people of Chester and Delaware county the story of the Porters is as familiar as household words. For five generations, in colonial times, in the Revolutionary struggle, in the French difficulties, in the second war with Great Britain, in the subjugation of the pirates of the Gulf, in the Mexican and in the great Civil War, the records of the "Fighting Porters" stand forth conspicuously in the annals of our country.

The home of the Porters sixty years ago was one of the most attractive and noted places on the Delaware river. A Colonial mansion, a short distance east of the Market street wharf, where the steamboats landed, embowered by towering forest trees, while along the river bank, the well-kept shrubbery and velvet lawn reached down to a sea wall, appropriately entitled it to the name it bore—Greenbank. The old dwelling which resembled that at Mount Vernon in its general architecture, was erected by the Great Chief Justice of Colonial Pennsylvania, David Lloyd, in 1721. It was in 1816—although David Porter and Evelina Anderson Porter, his wife, had their home at Greenbank since 1809—that Major William Anderson, in consideration of the natural love and affection which they—he and his wife—"have and bear for their son-in-law, the said David Porter, as well as in consideration of one dollar" conveyed to Commodore Porter in fee, the Greenbank mansion house and four acres

of ground surrounding it. It was here Porter came after war clouds drifted by in the fall of 1814.

It was about noonday of March 11, 1813, that the American 32-gun frigate *Essex*, Capt. David Porter commanding, reached Chester and announced the glorious victory in which the British frigate *Castor*, outnumbering in guns and men the *Essex*, had been compelled to strike her colors to the valiant seaman, whose heroic deeds are part of the national history, and have imparted lustre to the place of his residence—this city. The people of the town, even those who were adverse to the war, were enthusiastic at the welcomed news, for in the glory of the officer so well-known to them all, they felt each of them a personal pride. Aaron Cobourn, then postmaster of Chester, in dispatching the mail that afternoon by stage to Philadelphia, endorsed as a postscript to the way bill, which by regulation was then required to accompany each mail sent out from an office, a brief statement of Captain Porter's arrival, the capture of the "*Castor*," and the fact that the loss on the British vessel had been enormous—150 men of the English frigate had been killed and wounded. The news of the victory was published in the *Freeman's Journal*, of Philadelphia, the next day and from its columns was copied by the press throughout the entire country.

Years afterwards, when the old Commodore, David Porter, died near Constantinople, his body very properly was brought to this country in the United States brig *Truxton*, for it was under old Commodore Thomas Truxton, that Porter first attracted public attention. The vessel reached Chester January 23, 1844, and as a mark of respect, lay at anchor for a day off the old homestead, "*Greenbank*," and many of the residents of the old town took advantage of that day to board the vessel and gaze at the casket of the dead man, who, for many years, had made Chester his home and where many of his children were born.

The Porter boys inherited from their grand sire, Captain David Porter, of the Revolutionary Navy, that temerity which he exhibited in his escape from the Jersey prison ship in an empty water cask, and from their father, the old Commodore, impetuous courage, as shown by him in a hundred ways during his eventful career. It is not too

much to say that the history of the United States does not present a family that has done more to shed lustre on the American naval annals than did the fighting Porters of Pennsylvania.

ADMIRAL FARRAGUT.

It was at Greenbank where the Sea King David Glascoe Farragut passed his boyhood days ashore. He had been adopted by Commodore Porter before he was ten years old and as a boy of thirteen had shared the triumph of Porter in the Atlantic and his defeat in the Pacific, when, in the Bay of Valparaiso, he had been compelled to strike his flag to the Phoebe and Cherub, in an unequal battle, that added lustre to the stars and stripes, which had gone down in a struggle against overwhelming odds. The young boy's commanding officer had eulogized the lad midshipman's bravery and conduct in his official report, giving as a reason that he had not recommended Farragut for promotion because "he was too young," to be advanced to place in which greater responsibilities would be cast upon him. W. H. Davenport Adams, an Englishman, in his "Farragut and Other Great Commanders," tells us that in the autumn of 1814, "through the good offices of Capt. David Porter, Farragut, who had been baptized David, after the commodore, was placed in a school at the pleasant little town of Chester, Pennsylvania." It was in the old school house at Fifth and Welsh streets, erected in 1770, and torn down in 1870, under the tutorage of Samuel Lytle, an Irishman, that the future Admiral Farragut was a pupil for a brief period, later Captain Porter sent him to the School at Village Green, Aston township, Delaware county, which Joseph Neef, a Frenchman, had established there, where the instruction was according to that employed in the noted Pestalozzi system of Switzerland, where he remained for several years, interrupted by brief sea duty. Only a few years ago, several of the young girls of that day who lived to be elderly ladies, could recall the David G. Farragut of their youth, as a slender, homely-faced, under-sized young chap, who held himself very erect and who wore a stiff stock to support his chin that he might take advantage of every inch of stature that nature had given him.

Farragut was promoted to lieutenant at 17, and his subsequent history is well known. He was wont to say that what he learned in Chester had lasted him "all through life." He was born in 1801 and died at the Portsmouth, N. H., Navy Yard in 1870. No one in Chester could have known that the little midshipman who played around Aunt Polly Engle's tavern on Third street near the bridge was destined to become the country's most famous admiral.

WILLIAM DIXON PORTER, Captain Porter's eldest son, was the only one of his children not born at "Greenbank." William was born at New Orleans, when Porter was stationed there, and at a time when his father was seriously considering whether it would not be advisable for him to abandon the naval service for that of the merchant marine. When 16 he was a midshipman and had gradually risen in rank until at the approach of the Civil War he was a captain and in command of the sloop-of-war St. Mary, on the Pacific station. His loyalty to the flag was unjustly suspected for no other reason than that his birth had been in the far South, although all his youth had been spent in Chester. He was, however, assigned to duty on the Mississippi and placed in command of the iron-clad Essex, and took part in the attack on Fort Henry, Feb. 6, 1862. In that engagement just as victory was assured a ball from the Confederate fort plunged through the boiler of the Essex and the escaping steam scalded Porter so severely that he ultimately died from its effects. When told that the day was won Porter rallied, and "raising himself on his elbow called for three cheers and gave two himself, falling exhausted on the mattress in his effort to give a third." Notwithstanding his feeble health, he returned to duty, ran the batteries between Cairo and New Orleans and on August 6, 1862, attacked the rebel ram Arkansas, and despite her great superiority in armament and men, destroyed her. He assisted in the attack on Port Hudson, but by this time he had grown physically so weak that he was ordered to New York on sick leave, where he died May 1, 1864.

A PERILOUS TRIP.

Theodoric Porter, the third son, was noted for his enormous bodily strength. In the summer of 1835, when only 17, he swam from Greenwich Point to Chester, about fifteen miles, and more than forty years elapsed before any one was able to accomplish the like feat. The winter of 1833-34 was severely cold and for several weeks in the latter part of January and the beginning of February, the Delaware had been full of great blocks of floating ice. One evening in a store in the town a gentleman stated that on the Hudson and in many of the Eastern States, sleighing on the ice was a recognized winter pleasure. To the amazement of all gathered in the shop, Theodoric announced his purpose to sleigh to the old Navy Yard at Philadelphia the next day, if the ice permitted, and his brother, Hamilton, a stripling of fourteen, declared that he would accompany Theodoric on his journey. The next morning, for the tidings that the boys contemplated the journey had been noised abroad over the town, a goodly number of persons assembled at Greenbank—Capt. David Porter was absent from home—several coming to urge the lads to abandon their perilous attempt. The previous night had been intensely cold, so much so that the river was frozen solidly with a rough, jagged surface, from shore to shore, and a slight sprinkle of snow covered the ice and land. All efforts to have the Porter boys abandon their purpose were unavailing. About 9 o'clock the horse was harnessed to a cutter, and Theodoric, his brother, Hamilton, at his side, drove to the foot of Welsh street, then known as "Love Lane," where striking the animal smartly with the whip, it sprang upon the ice and the rash ride had begun. The sudden hard frost had arrested the running ice at the mouths of Ridley, Crum and Darby creeks, and the pressure piled it several feet in height for some distance in the river, hence the route taken by the driver was well in the channel, where the surface though rough was comparatively level. When Tinicum Island was reached the Lazaretto channel was followed and the sleigh passed safely Maiden's Bar, the mouth of the Schuylkill, and rounded the Horseshoe until finally, about mid-day, the driver drew rein alongside the

Sea Gull, the receiving ship at the old Philadelphia Navy Yard. The ice in the dock had been broken and the boys were compelled to hitch their horse to the ship, for it would be possible to get the animal ashore only with great labor. The naval officers at the yard gave the sons of the old Commodore a hearty welcome. At three o'clock the Porter boys re-entered their sleigh.

All day long the cold had strengthened the ice, while the horse, although it had been well fed, was nigh benumbed when Theodoric gathered up the reins for the home stretch. The officers of the Yard insisted that the boys should abandon the return trip, but as in the morning, the suggestion met only an energetic refusal, and the horse was headed for Chester. A piercing wind swept from the west and in an hour's time the lads were chilled to the marrow, so that to prevent being frozen, they approached the shore, where they gathered some drift wood that had been thrown on the bank by the high tides, and struck a light with flint and tinder, and soon had a roaring fire. There they tarried for nearly an hour. When they resumed their ride, it was under the starlight, and the end of the journey was reached at nine o'clock that night. A crowd awaited their coming with the utmost anxiety, for the delay of their return had given currency to many rumors as to their safety, which ran riot through the town. The Porter boys, neither of whom was out of his teens, had driven twenty-two miles over the breast of the frozen river and had performed a daring feat, never before accomplished, so far as all record goes, and has never since been accomplished on the Delaware.

FIRST OFFICER KILLED IN MEXICAN WAR.

Theodoric Porter entered the Army in 1838 as a lieutenant in the Seventh U. S. Infantry, and was assigned with his regiment to duty at the southwestern boundary of the territory, adjoining that part of Mexico which afterwards became Texas. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, on the evening of April 18, 1846, he, with a detachment of ten men, had been sent out from General Taylor's encampment almost three miles from Matamoras, on scout

duty. His command was attacked by fifty Mexicans, who fired upon the Americans. Porter fell, as did three of his men. The others fled. Porter did not die instantly, for army officers related that when the bodies of the Lieutenant and his men were recovered next morning, several dead Mexicans were found lying around his corpse, and there were indications that, fatally wounded as he was, he had made the enemy, that had closed in about him, suffer severely before he died. The Mexican authorities declared that the small body of Americans had been attacked by a band of roaming banditti and not by any part of their regular troops. Historians have strangely overlooked the fact that Theodoric Porter was the first American officer killed in the Mexican War. That is usually said to have been Lieutenant Mason, killed April 24, 1846, during a reconnaissance made by Captain Thornton, in which nearly his whole force was captured, and Thornton only escaped by forcing his horse to an extraordinary leap over a thick hedge. Theodoric Porter was slain six days prior to the skirmish in which Mason fell, and as he was on duty when attacked by the enemy, it seems clear beyond doubt, that Porter was the first officer killed on the American side during that War. Heitman's Directory of the U. S. Arms., Vol. 1, page 809, gives the date of Porter's death as of the 19th of April. The body of the slain Lieutenant was forwarded to Chester, where it was interred in St. Paul's graveyard, and lies there now in an unmarked grave.

Hamilton F. Porter was appointed a midshipman on the United States schooner *Flict*. While at sea he was taken ill and Lieutenant Davis, in command of the vessel, ran into Charleston Harbor to obtain medical aid, when it was found that Porter had yellow fever, of which he died August 10, 1844, in his twenty-third year. He is buried in St. Michael's Episcopal churchyard in that city.

HENRY OGDEN PORTER.

Henry Ogden Porter, another son, entered the navy in 1840, when sixteen, but resigned in 1847, after having seen service in the Mexican War and had been present

at the bombardment of the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa. He entered the Revenue Marine service. In 1856 he was a "filibuster," with General William Walker, "the gray-eyed man of destiny" in Nicaragua and at the battle of Rivas received nearly a dozen musket shot wounds, the effect of which were ever afterwards to seriously impair his physical activity. When the State of South Carolina seceded, Porter, who had returned to the Revenue Service, was attached to the Cutter "*Aiken*," in Charleston harbor. When that vessel was surrendered by its commander, Captain Caste, to the State authorities, Porter was permitted to return North, when he volunteered in the Navy and was appointed acting master. On January 17, 1863, he was executive officer of the gunboat Hatteras. When off Galveston he did battle royal with the Confederate cruiser *Alabama*. Porter fought his guns until the vessel sank beneath the waters of the Gulf.

After being exchanged, he was assigned to the *Susquchanna*, and was engaged in the two days' battle at Fort Fisher, in which that vessel took part. On the return of peace, he re-entered the revenue service and died near Baltimore, May 22, 1872.

ADMIRAL D. D. PORTER.

David Dixon Porter was the most distinguished son of the Porter family. He was the second child and was born in June, 1813. He was famous for his strength. It was said of him that when a lieutenant he would raise a 32-pound shot from the ground by seizing it with his hand on top. He was appointed a midshipman in 1829 on board of the *Constellation*, a ship that is still in service at the Training Station, Newport, R. I. In 1841 he was promoted to lieutenant and served with that rank aboard the *Congress* for four years. In 1849 he and several other lieutenants of the Navy were granted leave to command vessels of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, where he remained several years. After this he was detailed to go to the Mediterranean to secure a supply of camels to be used in the arid regions of Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. This experiment was not wholly successful, but the transportation

of the camels was accomplished in the U. S. S. *Supply*. In 1861 he was made a commander and placed in charge of the *Pemberton*, 11 guns. In this ship he conducted a secret expedition to the relief of Fort Pickens, at the mouth of Pensacola Bay. There he supervised a mortar flotilla of schooners to assist in the reduction of Fort St. Philip and Jackson and the Mississippi and spent several months in getting it ready. In April, 1862, he shared with Farragut the glory of passing the forts and capturing New Orleans after six days of incessant bombardment. We next read of Porter commanding the squadron on the Upper Mississippi, which grew to number one hundred vessels, and always with energy and courage. In 1864, he was transferred to the North Atlantic fleet and led the operations at Fort Fisher, near Wilmington, N. C. For his valuable services during the Rebellion Porter was four times thanked by Congress.

Some of the school boy friends of Admiral David D. Porter used to relate his "first baptism of fire" thus. One Saturday afternoon he and some school-boy friends purchased several pounds of powder and in the garden near the old family mansion made what they called a squib—that is, they dug a shallow, narrow trench in the ground, which they filled with the powder, depositing the greater part of the "villainous saltpetre," at the end in a deeper excavation. The trench was to act as a fuse and carry the fire to the mine. The whole was then carefully covered with turf. Everything being completed to the boys' approval, Dave Porter and Geo. W. Piper got on their hands and knees to blow the flame. A moment later the squib exploded and the lads were blown with considerable force against the fence. The hair on their heads was burned completely off, while the skin of their faces and hands was badly blistered. After the Franco-Prussian War, in which the Emperor Napoleon gave the phrase world-wide circulation, when the incident was recalled to Admiral David D. Porter's recollection, he laughingly said: "Yes, that was my baptism of fire."

REAR ADMIRAL ENGLE AND THE PRINCETON.

Rear Admiral Frederick Engle was born in Chester in 1799, and was 15 when, in 1814 he entered the navy as a midshipman, sailing with Commodore David Porter when that officer swept the seas of pirates, particularly in the West Indies, and in the many encounters with these enemies of mankind Midshipman Engle highly distinguished himself. Before the Mexican War he had reached the grade of Captain.

It was in the summer of 1845, that the Princeton, the first screw propeller in the American service, and the first vessel of war of that type in the history of navies of the world, sailed from Philadelphia to take part in the Mexican War. The steamship was designed by Commodore Richard F. Stockton, and was a marvel at that time, although when compared with the men-of-war of the present she dwarfs into insignificance. Her total length was 165 feet, breadth 30 feet, and her original cost \$212,000. She was pierced for 30 guns and carried in addition a large swivel on the main deck. She was ship-rigged and her maximum speed 10 knots an hour. She had been launched at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in the fall of 1843. After the bursting of the "Peacemaker," the big swivel gun at Washington, D. C., February 28, 1844, an accident by which many distinguished men lost their lives, spreading gloom over the whole country, she was refitted at the old Philadelphia Navy Yard.

It was known in Chester that the Princeton was coming down the river that summer day of 1845, and as her captain, Frederick Engle, was a Chester-born man, the people of the town in large numbers had gathered at the wharves and along the water side to see her pass and give the noted National ship God's speed on her voyage. Naval men of the day often told of the appearance of the *Princeton*, when later, for the first time, she steamed into the port of Vera Cruz, her sails nicely furled, her yards squared and the Stars and Stripes at the peak. As she burned anthracite coal, no smoke was discernable from her stack, which was so short that it was only a trifle above her bulwarks, and as a strong wind was blowing, it caused

her to careen slightly, giving to her, seen from a distance, the appearance of having struck on a reef. Several French and Spanish men-of-war were at anchor in the harbor, as was the English frigate, *Euridyce*. Captain Elliott, the commander of the latter, observing what he supposed was the critical condition of the *Princeton*—then without knowledge of the name of the vessel—dispatched an officer to acquaint Captain McClurg, commanding the United States sloop-of-war *John Adams*, that an American sailing ship had struck on a reef. Before the boat could return, much to Elliott's surprise and that of the other foreign naval officers, the ship, still careening and without apparent cause rapidly drew near and they discovered that it was the famous steamship *Princeton* approaching them. The foreign naval vessels, as the marine wonder glided by, greeted her with hearty cheers.

It was on March 22, 1847, that the *Princeton*, under the command of Engle, took part in the bombardment of Vera Cruz and the Castle of San Juan d'Ulloa, and it was a shot from that vessel which made the first breach in the walls of the fortress, of all of which Chester was properly proud.

During the war in the Crimea, he was on duty in the Mediterranean and Black Seas and visited the scenes of battle. In May, 1861, he was dispatched to the East India Station to relieve Commodore Stribling, whose loyalty was suspected, in command of the flag-shap "*Hartford*." Engle journeyed over land from England to Hong Kong—It was the days before the Suez Canal, where he took command of the vessel, which afterwards became famous in our national history under Farragut—and brought it safely home to Philadelphia in December 1861. He also brought with him the sloop "*John Adams*," 20 guns, and the steam sloop, *Dacotah*, six guns. Subsequently he was in command of the "*Wabash*." The 47 years of active service in the Navy began to press hard on him and on December 1, 1861, he was placed on the retired list as Captain. July 10, 1862, he was made Commodore on the retired list and in 1867 Rear Admiral. He died suddenly in Philadelphia, February 12, 1868, aged 69 years.

REAR ADMIRAL CROSBY.

Rear Admiral Pierce Crosby was born at Chester, January 16, 1824, entering the Navy June 5, 1838, as a midshipman, and in 1844 became a passed midshipman and in that grade served with distinction in the Mexican War in the sloop-of-war *Decatur*. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1853, and held that rank in 1861, when he was on duty in Chesapeake Bay and the Sounds of North Carolina, being complimented by General Butler for his conduct at the capture of Forts Hatteras and Clark. In April, 1862, he was in command of the gunboat "*Pinola*," and during the night of the 23d, that vessel and the "*Itasca*," (Adams, in his "Farragut and Other Great Commanders" says "under his valiant officers, Crosby and Caldwell," contrived to reach the chain across the Mississippi undiscovered and broke it. This left a channel way to the fort.) led the fleet when Farragut determined to run by Forts Jackson and St. Philip and passed through the chain barrier which the Confederates had stretched across the Mississippi at these forts. He was present at the capture of New Orleans, April 25, 1862, and when Farragut and his fleet ran the batteries at Vicksburg, June 30th, 1862, and returned fifteen days later, Crosby in command of the "*Pinola*," shared in the glory of that daring act. On September 13, 1862, he was promoted to commander and rendered effective service during the year 1863-64 as commander of the "*Florida*" and "*Keystone State*." May 27, 1868, he was promoted to captain and in April, 1865, in command of the "*Metacombet*," he was active in the dangerous services preceding the capture of Mobile. Rear Admiral Thatcher, in his despatches of April 12th to the Navy Department, said: "I am much indebted to Captain Crosby, who has been untiring in freeing the Blakeley River of torpedoes, having succeeded in removing one hundred and fifty—a service demanding coolness, judgment and perseverance." In 1872 he was in command of the frigate "*Powhattan*," and in 1878 was ordered to the Navy Yard at League Island, retaining command there until 1881. He was promoted Rear Admiral March 10, 1882, and retired on his own application, October, 1883. Admiral Pierce Crosby died at Washington, D. C.

LIEUTENANT FERDINAND PIPER.

Ferdinand Piper, born at Chester in 1812, was appointed a midshipman in U. S. Navy November 1, 1827; passed midshipman, June 10, 1833; promoted Lieutenant, December 9, 1839; drowned at sea, October 28, 1844. His death was heroic, for he sacrificed his life to save the lives of his men under his command. A boat in his charge was upset at sea. The whole party clinging to the capsized boat caused it repeatedly to sink beneath them. Lieutenant Piper ordered the men to hold on to the boat until rescued, and then said: "Good-bye, lads," loosened his grip, and after a brief struggle to support himself in the water, he sank beneath the waves, giving his young life to save those of the common sailors. John Hill Martin, in commenting on this incident, says: "I have no fitting words to characterize, as it deserves, this act of sublime courage, this proud instinct of an officer's duty to those under his command." (History of Chester, p. 269.)

The Upland Union published the following local: "Died. On the 28th of Oct. 1844, in the Bay of Pensacola, in the 32nd year of his age, Lt. Ferdinand Piper, of the U. S. Navy, youngest son of Joseph and Sarah Piper, deceased, late of the Borough of Chester.

"Death has thus within a few months deprived the Borough of Chester of two esteemed and highly respected citizens and officers of the Navy, creating deep grief in the hearts of their relatives and friends that time alone can assuage. Mr. Piper was deservedly beloved by his relatives, friends and brother officers, for the urbanity of his manners and the goodness of his heart."

Another account says: Piper had left the frigate "*Falmouth*," in a cutter designing to bring supplies to the ship. When about midway to the landing a sudden flaw of wind struck the boat and before sail could be shortened she was overturned. All the men were encouraged by the good conduct and presence of mind of Lieut. Piper, and were clinging to the overturned boat, when a heavy sea washed Piper, Professor Wm. S. Fox, and six of the seamen away and they were lost. The schooner "*Otter*" rescued the survivors that evening.

SURGEON SAMUEL ANDERSON.

Dr. Samuel Anderson, born in 1773, was appointed by President Adams Surgeon's Mate in the Navy and a month later was commissioned surgeon and assigned to duty under Captain David Porter, a personal friend. After several years' sea service, by reason of ill health he was granted indefinite sick leave. In 1811 he was made Lieut. Colonel of the 111th Pennsylvania Militia and during the War of 1812, recruited a company of volunteers from the neighborhood of Chester, known as the Mifflin Guards. He was elected to the Legislature in 1813 and again in 1816, 1817 and 1818. In 1819 he was commissioned sheriff of the county. He was recalled to active duty in 1823 and assigned to the West India squadron, commanded by Commodore Porter, who was then engaged in ridding the Gulf of pirates. He was surgeon of the ship "*Hornet*," and later of the "*Decoy*," stationed at Matanzas, Cuba. His health again failing, he returned to Delaware county, and in 1825 was again elected to the Legislature, and the following year to Congress. While serving in the latter capacity, Porter applied to the Department to have him assigned as surgeon of his squadron, but as Porter shortly after quarrelled with the Navy Department and resigned from the service, Anderson was not ordered to report for duty. He was elected to the Legislature again in 1829, 31, 32, 33 and during the session of 1834 was the Speaker of the House, all of which must sound very queer to the naval officers of to-day.

Midshipman James Anderson, son of Dr. Samuel Anderson, a promising young officer of the Navy, died in 1840, while on a visit to his father.

BRIGADIER GENERAL HENRY CLAY COCHRANE

General Cochrane was born in Chester November 7, 1842, and was appointed by President Lincoln a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps and passed the entering examination August 29, 1861, but his age being under twenty, precluded him from being commissioned. He was, therefore, appointed a Master's Mate until old enough

to qualify. He served under Admirals Goldsborough, Dupont and Farragut until March 10, 1863, when he was confirmed by the Senate. He was in the battle of Port Royal, S. C., on his nineteenth birthday, and during the following forty years served in the Gulf and Mississippi squadron at the Naval Academy, War colleges, most of the Navy Yards of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; also in Alaska, Hawaii, Mexico, Central and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, China and the Philippines. He has spent fifteen years at sea, cruising in ships from the old sailing ship *Jamestown* to the modern flagship *Philadelphia*. Helped to suppress the Labor Riots in 1877 and arson and pillage abroad in Alexandria, Egypt, after the bombardment of that city by the English in 1882; also on the Isthmus of Panama in 1885. Was present at the coronation of the Czar Alexander III., in Moscow, and decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor by President Carnot, of France, for services at the Universal Exposition of 1889, at Paris, where he commanded a detachment of U. S. Marines. During the war with Spain, he was Major of the famous Marine Battalion, which held the heights of Guantánamo, Cuba, and was detailed as Governor of the City of Manzanillo; was sent to China in 1900, when the foreign Legations were besieged in Peking, in which remarkable campaign his regiment lost a captain and over thirty men. From China he went to Manila and organized and commanded the First Brigade of Marines and was appointed Military Governor of the Peninsula of Cavite. Returned to the United States, commanded the Marine Barracks at Portsmouth, N. H., and League Island, Pa., and after a short tour of duty in St. Louis, Mo., retired upon his own application after forty years' service, March 10, 1905.

LIEUTENANT SAMUEL EDWARDS.

Lieutenant Samuel Edwards, of Chester, was warranted a midshipman in the Navy in 1838, passing a most creditable examination. He was promoted to Lieutenant and during the Mexican War was at the bombardment of Vera Cruz in the "*Princeton*," and was attached to the battery which first made a breach in the walls. He served

for a time in the "*Cyane*" during the Walker filibustering expedition and then on the Great Lakes. He married in Erie, Prussia, and died there March 22, 1861, aged 39 years.

COMMANDER DE HAVEN MANLY.

Commander DeHaven Manly, son of Charles D. Manly, a prominent lawyer of the Delaware County Bar, was born in Chester, December 20, 1839, and entered the United States Navy September 25, 1856.

His first orders were to the "*Brooklyn*," to assist in surveying the Chinqui lagoon, Isthmus of Panama. The breaking out of the Civil War found him still on the "*Brooklyn*" at the reinforcement of Fort Pickens and the first blockading vessel off the entrance to New Orleans. He was made prize master of her first prize which he took to Key West, where there was an Admiralty Court. He served next in the "*Crusade*" for a short time and then in the frigate "*Congress*," commanding a division of guns in the memorable action between the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*, at Hampton Roads, in which he was slightly wounded. He was promoted to lieutenant July 16, 1862, and in the "*Canandaigua*," was engaged in all the fights with Forts Sumter, Wagner and Moultrie. From the "*Canandaigua*" he went to the "*State of Georgia*," and in her carried the news North of the evacuation of Charleston. He next appears as executive officer of the monitor "*Canonicus*" in which he went to Havana to seize the Rebel ironclad "*Stonewall*." He was promoted Lieut. Commander in July, 1886, and commander, 1874. As commander he took the Ranges to the Asiatic station via the Suez Canal and came home in the *Alert*, in 1879, and was on duty in the Navy Department on account of loss of hearing he was retired in 1883, and later died.

COMMANDER EDWARDS F. LEIPER.

Commander Edwards F. Leiper, son of John C. Leiper, was born near Chester and entered the Naval Academy June 25, 1875. Graduated and promoted to En-

sign June, 1884. Served on coast survey steamer "*Argo*," special service in the *Dolphin*, on the "*Concord*," Asiatic station, and "*Monterey*." Promoted to Lieutenant, November 1896, and spent two years at the Naval Academy, training ship *Essex* to 1901, and a year at the League Island Navy Yard. Promoted Lieut. Commander October 1, 1902, and on the "*Detroit*" from 1903.

Retired on his own application after 30 years' service and is now superintendent of the Episcopal Hospital, Philadelphia.

COMMANDER W. H. G. BULLARD.

Commander William H. G. Bullard, appointed Naval cadet September 28, 1882, from Delaware county, was promoted to Ensign July 1, 1888; to Lieutenant, March 3, 1899; to Lieutenant Commander and to Commander in 1909. Has seen service in the Bureau of Equipment, aboard of the *Newark*, *Lancaster*, *Columbia*, *Monongahela*, *Princeton*, and three times at the Naval Academy. Still in service.

WAR VESSELS BUILT AT CHESTER.

To show that Chester has contributed to the material as well as to the personnel of the Navy, it must be said that so far back as war times in 1863 and 1864, there were built here the side-wheelers "*Waterloo*" and "*Shamokin*," the iron-clads "*Tunxis*," "*Lchigh*" and "*Sangamen*," and the screw propeller tugs "*Nina*" and "*Purita*," by Reaney, Son and Archbold. Since 1871, when John Roach and his son, John B. Roach, took charge of the shipyard they have turned out successively the "*Huron*" and "*Alert*" in 1874, the "*Miantonomah*," 1876, and "*Puritan*," 1882, the "*Dolphin*" "*Atlanta*," "*Boston*" and "*Chicago*," of the first White Squadron, in 1884, and the "*Concord*" and "*Bennington*" in 1890, and the "*Sylph*" in 1898. The "*Huron*" was wrecked on the coast of North Carolina, but all of the rest of the Roach built ships are on the Navy list of to-day

and available for service, as is the "*Relief*," which was the "*John Englis*."

In addition to these vessels this yard has given to the merchant marine over two hundred steamers such as the "*City of Peking*," which has been running in the Trans-Pacific trade for thirty-five years; the "*Colon*" and "*Colima*," even older; the "*City of Sydney*," "*Niagara*," "*Saratoga*," and "*Vigilancia*," and the "*Pilgrim*," "*Puritan*," and "*Priscilla*," palatial boats of the Fall River Line. The yard is now closed and has been for about two years and in the hands of a receiver, but it will long live upon its former glories.



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